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## “Righteousness” and “The Righteousness of God” in the Old Testament and in St. Paul.

PROFESSOR JAMES HARDY ROPES.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

OF all the chief theological terms used by the Apostle Paul the one in regard to the meaning of which there is least agreement among competent scholars is perhaps “the righteousness of God.” A glance at any conspectus of the views held by interpreters shows a bewildering variety, allowing, indeed, of a certain classification into groups, but presenting, even at this late stage of the discussion, scarcely any approximation to agreement.<sup>1</sup> And when the interpretations are examined in detail they prove unsatisfactory. Some of them can be applied only to a part of the passages, leaving other

<sup>1</sup> The views of the term “righteousness of God” held by many different commentators will be found summarized and classified in James Morison, *Critical Exposition of the Third Chapter of Romans*, 1866, pp. 314-323, and Th. Häring, *Δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ bei Paulus*, 1896. The conclusions to which the present study leads are not unlike the view suggested by some older writers, and advocated, though without the necessary proof that the interpretation is a possible one, by Ritschl, *Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, ii., pp. 103 ff., 113 ff. A similar view is elaborately but unsatisfactorily argued in Häring’s monograph.

The unconvincing outcome of any discussion in which the history of the idea is not fully treated may be seen in H. Holtzmann’s interesting review of Häring in *Theol. Literaturzeitung*, 1896, cols. 645 f., in which Holtzmann shows that he is shaken in his earlier view, but does not find himself in the clear. Similarly Archibald Robertson, in an article on “The Righteousness of God” in *The Thinker*, November, 1893, vol. iv., pp. 429-438, presents an acute and generally sound discussion of the Pauline passages, and refers to the Old Testament idea of righteousness, but seems to confess (p. 437) that he has not succeeded in finding the “vital link” between the “heterogeneous” elements which are found in this “composite idea.” He says, “It is easier to formulate St. Paul’s position in words than to explain the synthesis of ideas which underlies his language.”

In the discussion in Cremer’s *Wörterbuch der neutestamentlichen Gräcität*<sup>9</sup>, 1902, will be found references to the literature, a complete assemblage of the material, and, buried under much obscurity, a hint of the true solution. For other literature see the references given below.

cases of the term in the same immediate context to be differently explained. Others are an evident combination of two or more divergent, if not contradictory, interpretations, and break down of their own weight. Still others, which closely agree with the view that has commended itself to the present writer, have been presented with no adequate explanation of those particular circumstances connected with the history of the idea and phrase which alone make this view possible. These more correct interpretations have therefore been exposed to the same objections as many of the others, namely, that they are psychologically impossible, since, so far as is made to appear, no rational mind could so use the term "righteousness of God."<sup>2</sup>

The lack of certainty in the interpretation of the terms "righteousness" and "righteousness of God," is in marked contrast to the firm march of investigation and general agreement in the case of the kindred word "justify." That, as is now almost universally perceived by Protestant scholars, meant "acquit." In the case of "righteousness" scholars have failed to agree because they have confined themselves too closely to the analysis of the Pauline context, and have neglected the suggestions of older usage.<sup>3</sup> When that is understood

<sup>2</sup> The latest essay at the solution of this problem is contained in the articles by Professor James Drummond, in the *Hibbert Journal* for October, 1902, and January, 1903. Dr. Drummond's view is that Paul's great antithesis between the righteousness of works and the righteousness of faith is to be understood as between an external "conformity of our conduct to a righteous law" and an inward conformity of the will, in which the purposes of the heart have been so transformed that the man stands "on the side of God, with the divine life working in and through him, and yielding with the spontaneous ease of love the righteous acts which formerly were wrung from an unfilial heart." This latter state of man is called "the righteousness of God," and is at the same time "an attribute or predicate of God." The possibility of this combination of a state of man and an attribute of God is explained by a general appeal to "the example of Philo."

Dr. Drummond's description of Paul's doctrine presents it in a form easily acceptable to the modern mind. For practical purposes some such modification of Paul is probably necessary and salutary. But Dr. Drummond's statement will hardly be deemed a satisfactory account of exactly what Paul himself meant. His interpretation is too much concerned with psychological intelligibility under our modern conceptions to do full justice to the particular turn which Paul's thought took. He does not lay a sufficiently broad basis of dispassionate inquiry into the history of the idea and term in question, and consequently does not reach the ancient point of view from which the idea was a clear, if not a simple, one, and the term was appropriately chosen for its expression.

<sup>3</sup> The useful discussion of the term in G. B. Stevens's *New Testament Theology*, or the treatment in his article, "Righteousness in the New Testament," in

and brought into relation with Paul's language, his use of the term becomes perfectly natural and clear. The result is not at all revolutionary ; it is, indeed, to my mind recommended by the fact that it has been from time to time suggested and maintained, and that it is wholly in accord with the doctrines of Paul as generally understood. But it seems to me that the grounds for it have not hitherto been adequately presented. It certainly throws welcome light on several passages.

The proper method and order in such an investigation is surely first to become familiar with the use of the term in the Old Testament and other pre-Christian Jewish writings, and then to observe how far this usage explains the usage of the New Testament writers, and how far they have introduced new elements, whether from secular Greek thought and usage or through their own Christian conceptions. In the investigation we must take pains to avoid the error of Dr. Hatch ; we must not say, as he does, that a word uniformly used in the LXX. as the translation of a Hebrew word " must be held to have in " the New Testament " the same meaning as that Hebrew word." <sup>4</sup> That is sometimes, but by no means necessarily, the case.

Without delaying to defend this method of approach further than to remark Paul's own statement (Rom. 3<sup>21</sup>) that the righteousness of God has been " witnessed by the law and the prophets," I turn at once to the group of words which in the Old Testament associate themselves with righteousness. The root is צִדִּיק (*sdq*).<sup>5</sup> That its

Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible*, may be referred to as illustrating such an unaccountable omission to consider the Old Testament roots of Paul's thought. The commentators usually refer to some Old Testament parallels, but most of them draw nothing from these passages for their understanding of Paul. Yet some of the older commentators, e.g. Calvin, Hammond, Koppe, Rosenmüller, did not overlook the significance of the Old Testament analogies ; their treatment, however, was commonly unmethodical.

<sup>4</sup> *Essays in Biblical Greek*, p. 35.

<sup>5</sup> The review of the Hebrew usage in the following pages contains nothing that is not familiar to students of the Old Testament. The best account of this group of words is that given in James Skinner's article, " Righteousness in Old Testament," in Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible*, 1902. An important monograph is that of E. Kautzsch, *Ueber die Derivate des Stammes צִדִּיק im alttest. Sprachgebrauch*, 1881. For the literature see Skinner's article, Cremer's *Wörterbuch*<sup>9</sup>, 1902, and W. E. Addis's article, " Righteousness," in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, 1903. A brilliant and illuminative exposition of the usage in Isaiah 40-66 will be found in G. A. Smith, " *The Book of Isaiah* " (in the *Expositor's Bible*), ii., chap. 14. For some valuable suggestions I am indebted to Professor G. F. Moore.

derivation is unknown is no hindrance to the understanding of its meaning in actual usage. It will be best to look first at the verb "to be righteous" (*šādaq*), and the adjective "righteous" (*šaddiq*), and later at the nouns meaning "righteousness" (*sedeq*, *šēdāqāh*).

The most concrete, and therefore in all probability the relatively primary, meaning of the verb is "to be in the right," "to have a righteous cause," as if in a law-case before a judge. This is properly called a forensic, as distinguished from the broader ethical, meaning, but it does not necessarily imply that the case is actually brought to trial. With respect to any act of any person the question may arise whether it is according to the conventions of customary law; if it is so, he is pronounced to be in the right by any one who has occasion to refer to the act. Examples of this fundamental meaning are abundant. Thus in Gen. 38<sup>26</sup>, Judah says of Tamar, "She is more righteous than I," and he refers, not exactly to what we should call righteousness in the proper ethical sense, but rather to the strength of her case in defence of her unusual conduct; "she is in the right as against me." So in the direction for judges, Ex. 23<sup>7</sup>, "The innocent and righteous slay thou not," and vs.<sup>8</sup>, "A bribe . . . perverteth the words of the righteous." Again in Ex. 9<sup>27</sup>, after the earlier plagues, Pharaoh confesses himself beaten, and says, "I have sinned this time: Jahveh is righteous (*i.e.* in the right), and I and my people are wicked (*i.e.* in the wrong)." <sup>6</sup> In these cases the meaning is not the God-fearing or the morally excellent, but the party in court which has a good case; not *probus*, but *rectus in curia*.

In accordance with this meaning of the simple verb is the development of meaning in the other stems. The causative (*hiph'il*) stem (*hišdaq*) means "to put in the right," "to vindicate," "to acquit," "to decide in one's favor." <sup>7</sup> Deut. 25<sup>1</sup> is the stock example of this, "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, and the judges judge them; then they shall justify (*hišdaqū*) the righteous, and condemn (*hirshī'u*) the wicked." <sup>8</sup> Similarly the

<sup>6</sup> For the as yet not perfectly elucidated connection here exemplified between righteousness and victory (cf. Aram. *zēkā*), see F. Schwally, *Der heilige Krieg im alten Israel*, 1901, p. 8, and Wildeboer, in *Zeitschr. für alttest. Wissenschaft*, 1902, pp. 167-169. Ps. 51<sup>6</sup> (50<sup>6</sup>), where LXX. (perhaps under Aramaic influence) represents the parallel terms (*tišdaq*, *tiškeh*), by δικαιωθῆς, νικῆσθης, is of course a chief instance in this inquiry. <sup>7</sup> For this the LXX. has δικαιώω, the Vulgate *justifico*.

<sup>8</sup> The opposite of *šaddiq* is *rāshā*, meaning the party in the wrong. This root has had a development in many ways parallel to that of צַדִּיק. The *hiph'il* stem of the verb means "to decide against one," "to condemn"; on the other hand the root came to have the general ethical sense of "wicked."

*pi'el* stem (*šiddēq*) has the active transitive signification "to put another in the right," "to give him the advantage," with no reference to positive righteousness of character or conduct. Thus in Ezek. 16<sup>41</sup> the prophet says to one of several sisters, all outrageously wicked, "Thou has multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified (*tēšaddēqī*) thy sisters by all thine abominations which thou hast done." Now it is evident that my sins cannot make you good, but they can give you the advantage and make your case a good one when it comes to a comparison between us. So also the *niph'al* stem (*nišdaq*) is the passive of the *hiph'il*, and means "to be put in the right," "to be acquitted," "to receive a favorable verdict"; cf. Dan. 8<sup>14</sup>.

With a people, however, whose law and morality were inextricably intertwined, the development from the limited signification "rightness of one's case" in a particular controversy to "righteousness" in general was inevitable. So the verb and adjective are both used in a full ethical sense of the man whose conduct and character conform to the will of God and the current principles of morality. Examples of this are among the most familiar passages of the Old Testament. Ps. 1<sup>6</sup>, "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous," is one case out of scores.<sup>9</sup>

In accordance with the meanings seen in the verb and adjective are the meanings of the noun "righteousness," for which the Hebrew language possesses two synonyms (*šedeq*, *šēdāqāh*), bearing essentially the same signification. Righteousness means, first, "the attribute of being in the right," secondly, "the attribute of being righteous." The relation of these meanings to each other should be clear from our study of the verb and adjective without further comment. Both the meanings concern us, and require discussion.

From the former, or forensic, signification, "the attribute of being in the right," we get a series of uses in Hebrew which are foreign to our ordinary use of the term "righteousness" and are of importance

<sup>9</sup> The *hiph'il* and *niph'al* are scarcely ever used in this general moral sense for the obvious reason that, while it is natural to speak of putting a man in the right (*i.e.* deciding in his favor) and of being put in the right (*i.e.* gaining one's case), the idea of making a man righteous in the sense of transforming his moral character is one that seldom needed expression in ancient times, and on that account had usually to be expressed by more explicit terms or phrases, such as those used by Ezekiel (36<sup>25-27</sup>) when he speaks of God's making men clean, of his giving a new heart, and putting a new spirit in men whereby men shall be caused to walk in his statutes and keep his ordinances. The solitary clear case of *hišdīq* in this sense is Dan. 12<sup>3</sup>, "They that turn many to righteousness" (cf. also Is. 53<sup>11</sup>).

for the solution of our problem. From meaning the attribute or property of being in the right or of having a righteous cause, the word came to mean the righteous cause itself, "one's right." In this sense it is used in 2 Sam. 19<sup>29</sup>, "What further claim (*šēdāqāh*, righteousness) have I to cry to the king?" Neh. 2<sup>20</sup> "Ye have no portion, nor right (*šēdāqāh*), nor memorial, in Jerusalem." Compare also the instructive passages, 1 Kings 8<sup>32</sup> and Dan. 9<sup>7</sup>. Further, righteousness (*šedeq*) can mean the status of the man whose righteous cause is actually recognized by the judge as righteous, who not only is in the right, but has gained his rights, so far as the judge can give them to him. This seems to be the meaning in Is. 5<sup>23</sup> (Woe unto them), "that justify the wicked for a bribe and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him" (cf. also *dīn*, Is. 10<sup>2</sup>); of this development of the meaning we shall hear more later.

Of the other, or ethical, signification, "the attribute of being righteous," that is, righteousness in our modern sense, one very important application is to be noticed in particular. The words "righteous" and "righteousness" are used in the Old Testament with special frequency of the upright judge himself. And righteousness not only means the quality of righteousness or justice pertaining to the judge and to his decision, but also denotes the act itself in which this quality is embodied. The judge is just, and in his just decision he does justice, *i.e.* an act of justice. Of many examples, 2 Sam. 8<sup>15</sup> Ps. 9<sup>5</sup> may be mentioned. Now the righteousness of the judge was most commonly thought of by Hebrews with reference to his acquittal or vindication of the righteous, rather than with reference to his justice in sending retribution upon the wicked. It was not so much the justice of the judge rendering strictly to each party according to his deserts which impressed the mind of the Israelites, as rather the disposition of the judge to do justice to the righteous and downtrodden humble man. As the poor man has no influence by which he can impress the judge, any consideration shown him must be from righteousness alone. Hence righteousness and mercy came to be associated. The Israelite habitually looked at the justice of a judge from the point of view, not of a disinterested outsider, but of an innocent and defenceless suitor for protection.<sup>10</sup> An excellent illustration of this habit of mind is Is. 1<sup>17</sup>, where "judge the fatherless" and "plead for the widow" are parallel. See also Is. 11<sup>4</sup> Jer. 22<sup>15, 16</sup> Deut. 24<sup>17</sup> Ps. 10<sup>18</sup> 82<sup>3</sup>.

Thus the quality called *šedeq* corresponded, indeed, in some

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Wellhausen, *Geschichte Israels*, i., p. 432, note.

respects to our righteousness, which is the best translation for it ; but it came to differ widely in its chief practical associations, and so in the development of its less concrete senses, from the Roman *justitia*, the *constans et perpetua voluntas jus suum cuique tribuendi*, upon which the modern notion of justice or judicial righteousness has been erected.

This tendency of the term "righteousness," which, as applied to a judge, is here seen to verge toward the sense "mercy," was doubtless reënforced by a parallel tendency in the same direction, due to another cause. In later Israel almsgiving and mercy (with fasting and prayer) became more and more prominent in the ideal of righteousness, and so the word "righteousness," in the sense of general moral excellence, tended to mean especially almsgiving and mercy. Some of the cases in which the LXX. translates *sedeq*, *ṣēdāqāh*, by *ἔλεος*, *ἐλεημοσύνη*, may be due to this tendency ; and it is clearly seen in the variant reading in Matt. 6<sup>1</sup>, where the more specific *ἐλεημοσύνη* has been substituted in many manuscripts for *δικαιοσύνη*. The two tendencies coöperated to produce an extraordinary development of meaning in later Hebrew. There righteousness has even come to mean mere leniency on the part of a judge toward the poor and pitiable suitor. In one famous passage a judge is said out of "righteousness," *i.e.* mercy, to have paid out of his own pocket the debt which his "justice" had compelled him to declare due.<sup>11</sup> Righteousness (*i.e.* mercy) is repeatedly contrasted with strict justice.

Now many of the senses of righteousness which we have reviewed are naturally applied to God. Thus not only in the general sense of moral excellence or perfection was the righteousness of God frequently referred to by the Jews, but especially in the sense of the judge's merciful righteousness, the righteousness of God, who is the supreme ruler and judge, came to be a common expression. Sometimes, indeed, Israelites attributed their punishment to the motive of God's righteousness (as Neh. 9<sup>33</sup> Dan. 9<sup>14</sup>, etc.), but more frequently they appealed to his righteousness (as we should to his goodness or mercy) when they wished deliverance from their enemies, or from any need.<sup>12</sup> Religious men thought of the nation as a plaintiff with a righteous

<sup>11</sup> Bab. Sanh. 6<sup>b</sup>. For abundant examples of the usage in late Hebrew, see G. Dalman, *Die richterliche Gerechtigkeit im Alten Testament*, 1897; also Diestel in *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie*, 1860, p. 238, note 1, with references to older literature; and Skinner's article, "Righteousness in Old Testament," in Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible*, iv., p. 281.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Dillmann, *Alttestamentliche Theologie*, 1895, pp. 273 f.



cause. Similarly "the righteous acts of the Lord" which Samuel recounts to the people (1 Sam. 12<sup>7</sup>) are not, as we might expect, manifestations of his justice and uprightness, distributing to all according to their deserts, but examples of his gracious and undeserved goodness to Israel in spite of repeated apostasy and rebellion on the nation's part.

We see, then, that among the various senses of the term "righteousness" which we have thus far found in the Old Testament, (1) the general sense of moral excellence is predicable both of man and of God as a simple property or attribute. (2) In addition to this meaning, in which the term corresponds fully to our English use, there are two special uses which are significant for our present purpose: (a) For a man who possesses a righteous cause in a special matter, righteousness may mean his status when this righteous cause has been recognized and vindicated; while (b) for God, as for the human judge, moral excellence came naturally to be thought of as the attribute and the act whereby he vindicates those who have a righteous cause, or (what is to Hebrew apprehension the same thing) shows mercy to his oppressed people. In this last use of our term it may be defined as meaning God's "vindictive righteousness."<sup>18</sup> It is evident that these two special uses, though of wholly different origin, curiously complement each other. God's vindication of man can be described either as the righteousness of man or the righteousness of God. It belongs to man as a state into which he is, or hopes to be, put; it belongs to God as an attribute, and as the act in which that attribute is exercised. Naturally no single English word perfectly expresses all these senses of the Hebrew "righteousness."

In Is. 40-66 and in the Psalms the use of our group of words in this sense of "vindictive righteousness" and "vindicated state" had a great development. No one coming fresh from the study of the epistles of Paul can read Second Isaiah in the LXX. without being struck by the way in which *δικαιοσύνη* and *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* are used, as well as by the frequency of these expressions and the cognate words. Righteousness is used in the sense of moral excellence on the part of man in Is. 51<sup>7</sup> 58<sup>2</sup>, and in certain passages (e.g. Is. 45<sup>19</sup>) it may

<sup>18</sup> I have used the word "vindictive" to express this meaning because I know of no better term. This sense, in which it refers to the vindication of a plaintiff's righteous cause, is of course the exact opposite of the sense in which the terms "vindictive justice" and "vindictive justice" have sometimes been used, viz. to mean avenging or punitive righteousness. Cf. James Morison, *Critical Exposition of the Third Chapter of Romans*, p. 321.

perhaps be taken to mean general moral excellence in God. But the most striking and abundant cases are those in which righteousness is used as both man's and God's in the special sense of God's vindication of Israel. Israel is in danger, his enemies are triumphing over him, but his God is the supreme judge and ruler of the universe, and Israel's claim will be honored, Israel will be given his rights; Israel's righteousness will be manifested before the world, he will be vindicated by the interposition of his God. As one example may be cited Is. 54<sup>17</sup>: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness which is of me, saith the Lord." Here it is the righteousness of Israel that is referred to. More abundant are the cases where the righteousness or vindication of (*i.e.* on the part of) God is spoken of, which, as we have seen, is a manifestation of one form of God's moral perfection. A good case is Is. 41<sup>10</sup>, "Be not dismayed, for I am thy God; . . . yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." An extremely clear case is Ps. 69<sup>28</sup>, where the psalmist prays against his enemies, "Add iniquity unto their iniquity; let them not come into thy righteousness." Abundant examples of this sense from Isaiah, the Psalms, Job, and other books will occur to every student of the Old Testament.

Before we proceed to speak of Paul it is important to ask, What is the right, or righteousness, which Israel has, and which is to be vindicated by the act of God? In the Psalms it is doubtless in many cases the conscious piety and moral excellence of the worshipper of the Lord. In the profounder view of Isaiah this is not the case. There is no pretence that Israel possesses inner ethical righteousness. The nation's sins are not overlooked, and the deliverance is not usually made to depend on repentance and moral improvement. Nor is the expiation of Israel's sins which resides in the sufferings through which the nation has passed (Is. 40<sup>1-2</sup>) by itself sufficient to put Israel in the right so that she would deserve Jahveh's favorable sentence. No amount of suffering by heathen nations, although heroically endured, would have caused Jahveh to reveal his righteousness in their behalf. To the prophet's mind the motive lies rather in Jahveh himself, who, for his own sake, for the glory of his own name, has redeemed his Servant, whom he knew, chose, and loved. The prophet does not say that the relation is due to Jahveh's covenant with his people,<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> This is often assumed, probably in consequence of the authority of Kautzsch (cf. also Diestel, *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie*, 1860, pp. 190 ff., 199, 251),

although that would be germane to his thought. He seems to think of it rather as that of a patron to a client, a master to a "servant." God justifies his own people because they are his own. It is the gift of grace, for his name's sake, because the calling of God is not repented of.

But it is time for us to turn to Paul.<sup>15</sup> Paul knows and sometimes uses the terms "righteousness" and "righteousness of God" in the sense of general moral excellence, or perfection, as a Greek or a modern might understand it. For cases where the context makes this sense plain we may refer to Rom. 6<sup>13, 18, 19, 20</sup> 2 Cor. 6<sup>7, 14</sup> 11<sup>15</sup> Eph. 4<sup>24</sup> 5<sup>9</sup> 6<sup>14</sup> Phil. 3<sup>6, 9</sup> and ("the righteousness of God") Rom. 3<sup>5</sup>. This sense requires no comment, but it does not enable us to understand most of the cases in which Paul uses δικαιοσύνη. In these cases he clearly does not mean moral excellence, and he uses "the righteousness of God" as a property now of man and now of God. To explain these we must look farther; and we observe that Paul had also before him the peculiar senses of "righteousness" and "the righteousness of God" which we have seen in Isaiah and the Psalms. He was familiar with passages there in which the meaning "God's vindication of man" is unmistakable. The word "righteousness" was thus given to him with an active, transitive meaning which made it possible to think of it as an attribute and activity of God and as a state of man resulting therefrom. He has not, however, adopted the term unmodified and merely in its correct Isaian sense. For the explanation of this we must look at another of Paul's technical terms.

Besides the word δικαιοσύνη, "righteousness," he has also the word δικαίω, "justify," a word not very common in the Old Testament, but made by later Jewish religious usage a standing term of the religious vocabulary. This word means "pronounce righteous," or "acquit," and it pertains to Paul's fundamental conception of the moral relation of God to man. Its meaning, which is foreign to Greek secular usage, comes naturally, as we saw, from the general forensic signification of this group of words in Hebrew and the LXX. In the act of the judge denoted by it his righteousness (that is, his moral

and the term "covenant-righteousness" (*Bundesgerechtigkeit*) is used to denote what I have ventured to call "vindicative righteousness." Cf. G. A. Smith, *Isaiah*, ii., p. 224.

<sup>15</sup> The later Jewish writers outside of the Old Testament may be passed by here, for they do not at present give any great aid in our investigation.

excellence, especially his mercy) is exercised, and also righteousness (that is, the status of one who has received a favorable verdict) is bestowed on the righteous party before him. In the Old Testament the act commonly thought of was one of "vindication," in a case where a plaintiff sues before a judicial protector for his right and for deliverance from his enemies. But the favorable verdict of a judge may also be given in a different kind of case; it may be (cf. Matt. 12<sup>37</sup>) the justification, or acquittal, of a defendant in a criminal case. And in that sense (characteristic of the later Jewish usage) Paul is familiar with the word "justify." By justification he means the favorable verdict which would be granted to a righteous man, as defendant, if, when his character and conduct were thoroughly examined before the Great Assize of the Last Day, he were found innocent. It is evident that this "justification" is a different matter from the "vindication" of the patron's client of which Isaiah wrote.

The solution of the problem of Paul's use seems to lie here. He found the word *δικαιοσύνη* used abundantly in the Old Testament to denote a transitive act and the resulting state, and thus capable of use in connections where the secular Greek, or the English, "righteousness," as a quality, is wholly meaningless. He, however, understood the double sense of this noun, not by the aid of the history of the term in its Old Testament use, but in the light of the current use of the verb *δικαίω*, "justify." He put into it all the meaning that *δικαίω* had come to have in his theology. As in the Old Testament *δικαιοσύνη* was the attribute of God from which his willingness to vindicate the righteous cause of Israel sprang, so with Paul it is the source of God's "justifying" activity, with all that that implies. As in the Old Testament it was the promised state of vindication for which Israel longed, so with Paul it is the "justification" which has already come unto all them that believe in Christ. The meanings of the term "righteousness" which are found in Paul could not have arisen by any processes of the Greek mind; the necessary basis for them was in the Hebrew word, and came from it through the LXX. into the usage of Greek-speaking Jews. Yet Paul's use is not the mere perpetuation of the meaning of Isaiah and the Psalms; it is rather that meaning seen from the point of view of the word in which a later generation of Jews summed up their hope of salvation. Not so much deliverance from their enemies<sup>16</sup> as acquittal before the bar of God

<sup>16</sup> The reference often made to Ps. 51<sup>16</sup>, as showing that in the Old Testament, too, is found the conception that God's righteousness is exerted to bestow inner moral deliverance from sin, is due to the mistaken translation of *dāmin*, which

was what the nobler spirits among them had come to desire ; and, after the manner so familiar in all the history of religious thought, the old word lent itself readily to the new and loftier sense. At the same time Paul's Christian theology of salvation led him away from the mere "acquittal" of the Pharisees and back to something more like, though not identical with, the "vindication" of Isaiah. Perhaps the barbarous expression "vindication justification" makes the meaning tolerably clear.

Before proceeding to glance at the passages themselves which present the positive evidence that this understanding of Paul's use of "righteousness" and the "righteousness of God" is correct, it is proper to observe that the other uses of "righteousness" to which appeal is ordinarily made are not only unsatisfactory in application, but for special reasons are unlikely to have guided Paul's use in this phrase. Thus against the method of starting, as many do, from the ordinary secular use of *δικαιοσύνη*, signifying moral excellence in general and nothing else,<sup>17</sup> stand two facts. First, *δικαιοσύνη* is itself not a very common word in secular Greek. Plato, for example, generally says *τὸ δίκαιον*. Hence Paul's own associations with the word would be chiefly derived from his reading of the LXX. and from the speech of Jews. And secondly, the cognate verb *δικαίωω* is admittedly used by Paul in a sense foreign to ordinary Greek usage, but common in the LXX. Others start from the Pharisaic watchword "righteousness," used as a term for the ideal of human character, and representing the system of thought out of which Paul had come and against which he directed his attack. But this does not give any aid in understanding Paul, at least as respects the phrase "righteousness of God," because the prominent features of the specific Pharisaic idea of righteousness cannot easily be transferred to God. If righteousness means predominantly obedience to the law, almsgiving, fasting, and prayer, we shall not be naturally led to say much about the righteousness of God. We shall speak rather of his holiness or mercy or truth. This is illustrated by the Pharisaic

means, not "blood-guiltiness" on the part of the psalmist, but the murderous attack of his enemies. The righteousness of God is here used in exactly the same sense as in Isaiah.

<sup>17</sup> Sanday and Headlam (*Comm. on Romans*, p. 25) start from this side, and reach an idea of "the righteousness of the Divine Will as it were projected and enclosing and gathering into itself human wills." This is a mystical conception upon which Dr. James Drummond's somewhat similar statement, referred to above, is a distinct improvement.

Psalms of Solomon. They use the phrase "righteousness of God," but the specific Pharisaic associations of righteousness are not there. On the contrary, they mean by it God's distributive justice,<sup>18</sup> or his moral excellence in general, or else are echoing (though with inadequate understanding) the language of Isaiah and the Psalms.<sup>19</sup>

It may further be pointed out as significant that the sense of righteous and righteousness which I have attributed to Paul is found in 1 John 1<sup>9</sup>, "faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins," perhaps in John 16<sup>8, 10</sup> 17<sup>25</sup>, and certainly in a passage preserved by Jerome (*Dial. c. Pelagium*, ii. 15) from the false conclusion of Mark's Gospel (16<sup>14</sup>), "Therefore now at length reveal thy righteousness" (*idcirco jam nunc revela justitiam tuam*).

The view here presented of the elements entering into Paul's use of righteousness is thus confirmed by the improbability of certain other views. The real test of the interpretation must consist in a complete and detailed study of the several passages where the word is used. But we can here only suggest certain general considerations relating to these passages and to the place of the conception of righteousness in Paul's system.

We will take first the cases in which Paul uses the word "righteousness" by itself without adjunct. These are much more numerous than the cases of the phrase "righteousness of God," and they have generally been better understood.<sup>20</sup> As we shall see, there is no reason for making, as is usually done, an absolute separation between

<sup>18</sup> See Ps. Sol. 2<sup>16</sup> 8<sup>29</sup>. 30. 32 9<sup>8, 10</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Ps. Sol. 9<sup>3</sup> 17<sup>25</sup>. 28. 42. 45 18<sup>8</sup>.

Those interpreters who try to understand the Pauline righteousness in the light of the Pharisaic conception take "the righteousness of God" as meaning primarily a property of men. It is "of God" because he bestows it. So B. Weiss, Lipsius, etc. But while this suits Rom. 1<sup>17</sup> but indifferently, and Rom. 3<sup>21 f.</sup> no better, it is wholly inapplicable in Rom. 3<sup>25 f.</sup> In this last place the term plainly means that attribute, or the exercise of that attribute, of God's nature in which he shows himself righteous. Most modern interpreters admit this, and the group represented by B. Weiss and Lipsius have frankly to abandon at this point the meaning which they assign to "the righteousness of God" in the earlier passages of this same epistle. Yet it is in fact impossible to dis sever Rom. 3<sup>21 f.</sup> and 3<sup>25 f.</sup> in interpretation.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Thayer's *Lexicon*, s.v. δικαιοσύνη. One chief reason is that in these cases the problem of understanding how righteousness could belong at once to man and to God did not exist. Hence the natural indications of the context have proved a sufficient guide to the true meaning. The explanation of how the word "righteousness" can have the meaning "justification" is, however, to be gained only from its history.

the meaning of the simple word and of the longer phrase. Paul uses the word to denote the attainable ideal which he offers for the satisfaction of the higher cravings of mankind. Righteousness in the ordinary sense, in which the Jews prized and pursued it, the opposite of iniquity, Paul believed to be unattainable by any direct exercise of man's will. Over against that ideal of a state of moral perfection he presents the new life of faith. Man, who sees that his own efforts after righteousness, however strong his will to do good, are unavailing by reason of the "flesh" and the power of sin, has now, since the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the opportunity to believe in Christ. That is something within his ability, and to those who believe is granted forgiveness, together with new powers of right conduct and Christlike character. This constitutes salvation.<sup>21</sup> To this state into which such faith introduces man Paul applies the term "righteousness." He means not another and better form of moral excellence, but a state of acquittal without moral excellence, that is, of forgiveness. By a singular, and for his purposes happy, accident of language, which our study of the history of the word has explained, he is able to use the very same word by which the contrasted ideal of man's attempted moral perfection was denoted. He is able to do so just because he has transcended the moralistic rigor of the Pharisees' theology, and has turned to something like the loftier doctrine of Isaiah. As Isaiah used righteousness to mean God's vindication and salvation of his Servant, who pleads for deliverance, so Paul declares that every man, not only the Jew but also the Gentile, who believes in Christ will enter into a relation to God like that of ancient Israel to Jahveh, a relation which *ipso facto* puts him "in the right," and by reason of which God is pledged to "vindicate" him. "They which be of faith, the same are sons of Abraham," "heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3<sup>7</sup>,<sup>29</sup>). The result of this vindictory act of God is man's state of "righteousness." Only, as we have seen, this "new life," this "righteousness," is a state, not of deliverance from earthly enemies, but of justification at the bar of God.

This contrast between ordinary righteousness and the righteous-

<sup>21</sup> The connection of faith with forgiveness and sanctification in Paul's system was not due to any analysis of the necessary implications of the act of faith and logical inference therefrom. The synthesis was made in the heat of Paul's own soul's life. He knew that these were the reward of faith because he had found it so in his own experience. The proof of his theology is a proof by life, not by logic.

ness which is justification is well exemplified by the familiar passages, Rom. 9<sup>30</sup>, "The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness (*i.e.* moral excellence, as set forth in the Jewish law), attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith (*i.e.* justification or forgiveness)," and Phil. 3<sup>9</sup>, "not having a righteousness of mine own (*i.e.* the unattainable moral perfection), even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." In these cases there is a certain play between the two senses, which seems to be found also in 2 Cor. 9<sup>9, 10</sup>. A play of similar nature, although Paul was probably unaware of it, is found in the usage in Rom. 4<sup>3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 22</sup> Gal. 3<sup>6</sup>. In these passages an Old Testament phrase, "reckon for righteousness" (*λογίζεσθαι εἰς δικαιοσύνην*), in which "righteousness" was used in the sense of moral excellence, is applied (that is to say, misapplied) by Paul in support of his system. The term in these passages goes in, so to speak, as moral excellence; it comes out, after Paul has used it, with his peculiar stamp upon it. Of the many cases in Paul's epistles where righteousness means unequivocally "justification," the state of forgiveness and the new life, the following will serve as examples: Rom. 5<sup>17, 21</sup> 6<sup>16</sup> 8<sup>10</sup> 10<sup>4, 6, 10</sup> 14<sup>17</sup>(?) 1 Cor. 1<sup>30</sup> 2 Cor. 3<sup>9</sup> 9<sup>10</sup> Gal. 2<sup>21</sup> 3<sup>21</sup> 5<sup>5</sup> Phil. 1<sup>11</sup>.

This brings us to the group of passages for the sake of which our investigation was begun, in which Paul speaks of "the righteousness of God." These consist of seven passages, besides Rom. 3<sup>5</sup>, which is of a different character, and of which I have already spoken. It is evident in Rom. 9<sup>30, 31</sup> 10<sup>3, 4</sup>, that the "righteousness" which belongs to men, coming by faith and through God's gift, and which Paul contrasts with the Jewish righteousness of works, may also be called "the righteousness of God." This is likewise suggested by Phil. 3<sup>9</sup>, where the true "righteousness" of Paul's gospel is also described as "the righteousness which is from God." But the "righteousness of God" is in other cases clearly an attribute of God, that, namely, which prompts to the justification of men. How it happened that a word, not itself originally a transitive verbal noun, gained these opposite senses, the usage in the Old Testament has already made clear to us. That this usage was familiar to Paul we shall not doubt when we turn to the earlier chapters of Romans. It is of much significance that in Rom. 3<sup>21</sup> he explicitly states that the "righteousness of God" now manifested was "witnessed by the law and the prophets." In Rom. 1<sup>17</sup>, the righteousness of God, which is now revealed in the Gospel, is contrasted with wrath,



which is God's attitude toward sin apart from redemption. Paul's meaning here is broader than "justification"; it is "vindication," redemption, grace, salvation. Only some meaning of that sort will yield good sense in this context. We may compare Is. 51<sup>5</sup>, "My righteousness is near, my salvation is gone forth," and 56<sup>1</sup>, "My salvation is near to come and my righteousness to be revealed," and 45<sup>21</sup>, "a righteous God and a saviour." In Rom. 3<sup>21, 22</sup>, the use is closely like that of 1<sup>17</sup>, to which indeed reference seems to be made. Here, as in 2 Cor. 5<sup>21</sup>, righteousness means "vindictive righteousness" conceived as justification. That the righteousness of God belongs both to God and to man is evident in two of these passages, for as in 1<sup>17</sup> "the just" who lives by faith seems to be the possessor of the righteousness of God, so in 3<sup>21, 22</sup> the righteousness of God comes through faith to all who believe.

In Rom. 3<sup>25, 26</sup> we have *δικαιοσύνη* and *δίκαιος*, referring to the same attribute of God, and the verb "justify" connected with them (*δικαιοῦντα*). The complete interpretation of these verses is a task by itself, but the meaning of *δικαιοσύνη*, which we have found characteristic of Paul, is here of notable assistance, while the interpretation to which it brings us has an interesting theological bearing. Under the traditional exegesis *δίκαιος* and *δικαιοῦντα* in v. 26 are set in opposition to each other, the former representing the distributive and punitive justice of God, the latter proceeding from his mercy. The phrase then means, "just in his determination to punish sin without fear or favor, and yet justifying the (sinner who is a) believer," *i.e.* being able to justify him by reason of the divinely provided propitiation. This, as has often been remarked, is an idea surprising to the reader, especially in view of v. 21. In fact, it suits the governmental theory of the atonement much better than it does the mode of thought of Paul. Give to *δικαιοσύνη* its proper Pauline meaning, and all difficulty at that point disappears. Paul is saying that God has given his Son in order to show his "vindictive" and redeeming righteousness, that he might be both vindictive and vindicator (redeemer and justifier) of him who has faith in Jesus. He vindicates and justifies just because it is his nature to be vindictive (or righteous) and justifying. The two words are not contrasted, but look in the same direction, and it is the direction to which the whole larger context tends.<sup>22</sup>

With this group of passages our task is ended, so far as it is pos-

<sup>22</sup> It is interesting to notice that the traditional Protestant interpretation of this verse is not that of Calvin. He was too shrewd an interpreter to fall into this trap, and he knew Isaiah too well to so misunderstand Paul.

sible to perform it without full interpretation of the several New Testament passages involved. The study of the history and Old Testament associations of the terms "righteousness of God" and "righteousness," in connection with the facts of Paul's use, seems to show that he employed the term "righteousness of God" in a sense often closely akin to "grace" (as was pointed out by Ritschl), and often hardly to be distinguished from "justification." This result leaves the general interpretation of Paul's theology untouched. That must be gained from the clear bearing of his own statements, which are fortunately so clear that a large measure of agreement among modern students is possible. It is, however, an advantage if we can understand this important term as one naturally used to express a great idea by a man whose roots went deep into the Old Testament religion, where the term had its rise, and who yet lived in the full tide of the Jewish religious thought of his own time. We have here a significant and instructive illustration of the fact that Paul the Pharisee, like his Master, turned back from the problems and dreams of his contemporaries to the words of the Prophets of Israel, and that he found in them with right the heralds of the Gospel of Christ.